

**FINAL REPORT  
OF THE  
NORTHWEST INDIANA  
TRANSPORTATION STUDY COMMITTEE**



**Indiana Legislative Services Agency  
200 W. Washington St., Suite 301  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2789**

**November, 2000**

# **Northwest Indiana Transportation Study Commission**

## **Membership Roster**

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A copy of this report is available on the Internet. Reports, minutes, and notices are organized by committee. This report and other documents for this Commission can be accessed from the General Assembly Homepage at <http://www.state.in.us/legislative/>.

## INTERIM REPORT

### **Northwest Indiana Transportation Study Commission**

#### **I. STATUTORY DIRECTIVE**

The Indiana General Assembly enacted legislation directing the Commission to do the following:

(1) Evaluate existing studies to address the needs and viability of high speed rail service in and through the state, including the:

- A. Midwest High Speed Rail Initiative Study;
- B. Federal Railroad Administration High Speed Rail Study; and
- C. The Indiana Passenger Rail Study;

(2) Review other high speed rail issues identified by the Commission as needing study;

(3) Monitor the development of commuter transportation and rail service in Westlake County-Chicago Lowell-Chicago and Valparaiso-Chicago corridors;

(4) Study all aspects of regional mass transportation and road and highway needs in Lake County, Porter County, LaPorte County, St. Joseph County, and Elkhart County; and

(5) Study other topics assigned by the Legislative Council.

Current Indiana law

P.L. 149-1999 (SEA 272) (November 2, 2001)

#### **II. INTRODUCTION AND REASONS FOR STUDY**

The Commission met to study various aspects of transportation in Northwest Indiana and to fulfill its statutory obligations.

#### **III. SUMMARY OF WORK PROGRAM**

The Commission met four times during the interim following the conclusion of the 2000 Session of the General Assembly. The meetings were held in Indianapolis, Chesterton, and South Bend.

(1) The first meeting, held on August 2, 2000, was devoted to High Speed Rail, the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD), and the Northwestern Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC), and the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT).

(2) The second meeting, held on August 30, 2000, was devoted to testimony on High Speed Rail funding, testimony on extra heavy duty trucks (Michigan Trains), and discussion of issues to be presented at future Commission meetings.

(3) At the third meeting on October 12, 2000, the Commission heard testimony about the plans for the South Bend Regional Airport. The Commission also heard testimony from a member of the NICTD Citizens Advisory Board. In addition, the Commission also heard testimony from representatives of the INDOT regarding the status of work on U.S. Highway 41. Testimony also was provided by a business owner whose business is located on U.S. Highway 41. The General Manager of NICTD discussed its financial condition and the cost of proposed capital improvements. The Chair requested resolutions to address and support the following: 1) the NIRPC's Vision 2020 Plan; 2) Commuter service for the Gary Airport; 2) High Speed Rail; 4) the South Suburban Expressway; 5) NICTD; 6) INDOT's efforts for funds for High Speed Rail.

(4) At its fourth meeting, held on October 27, 2000, the Commission heard testimony concerning the Lake County Regional Transportation Committee, Magnetic Levitation Technology, Proposed Hovercraft transportation from Northwest Indiana to Chicago, Virtual Weigh Stations, and voted on seven proposed resolutions all of which addressed various aspects of transportation, both for Northwest Indiana and Indiana generally.

#### **IV. SUMMARY OF TESTIMONY**

This interim report is a general summary of the testimony and comments received by the Commission. The Commission minutes are located on the Internet at [www.state.in.us/legislative/committee/nitc.html](http://www.state.in.us/legislative/committee/nitc.html).

##### **A. First Meeting (August 2, 2000) Chesterton**

The Commission reviewed its charge. It then heard testimony from Mr. Roger Sims, President of the High Speed Rail Association. Mr. Sims discussed the Midwest Rail Initiative and the on-going effort to develop an improved and expanded passenger rail system in the Midwest. Mr. Sims told the Commission that the sponsors of the Midwest Rail Initiative are: AMTRAK, the Federal Railroad Administration, and the transportation agencies of nine Midwest states: Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Nebraska, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Mr. Sims told the Commission of the potential routes to be used for high speed rail. For Indiana, they are Chicago to Indianapolis; and Indianapolis to Cincinnati. In his testimony, Mr. Sims also told the Commission of the potential costs for high speed rail. He said that the capital improvements are expected to cost \$4.1 billion (in 1998 dollars) and is spread over ten years. Mr. Sims said that the federal government would be the primary source of funding for high speed rail.

Mr. Larry Goode, Division Chief of the Intermodal Division of the INDOT addressed the Commission on the subject of high speed rail. Mr. Goode told the Commission that the INDOT is working on the refinement of routing and implementation issues regarding the Midwest Rail Initiative. He also said that preliminary engineering and environmental impacts are being addressed. Mr. Goode told the Commission that the INDOT is undertaking issue specific studies addressing possible alternative routes for high speed travel. Mr. Goode informed the Commission of the status of federal high speed rail legislation. He said that there are two bills in Congress. One is Senate Bill 1900 introduced by Senator Frank Lautenberg of New Jersey which has 50 co-sponsors, including Senators Lugar and Bayh. This AMTRAK funding bill calls for \$10 billion over ten years and bonding authority, with 95% spent on high speed rail. Mr. Goode said that a companion bill has been introduced in the House (House Bill 3700) has 100 supporters to date.

The Commission next heard testimony from Mr. Jerry Hanas, General Manager of NICTD. Mr. Hanas told the Commission that NICTD runs 41 trains per day during the week and 21 trains per day on the weekends and holidays. He said that NICTD carried 3.5 million passengers in 1999, a 36 year record. While carrying a record number of passengers, Mr. Hanas told the Commission that they are facing significant capacity constraints to increasing peak-hour ridership. Mr. Hanas told the Commission that fare box revenue amounts to 58% of NICTD's total revenue, with state contributions totaling 15%, federal funds amounting to 12% , and contracts and other funding totaling 15%. The Commission next heard testimony from Mr. Hanas about the major investments for NICTD. He said that these would total \$166.1 million for the period 2000-2005.

Mr. Jim Ranfranz, Executive Director of the NIRPC, addressed the Commission on the NIRPC Regional Transportation Plan-Vision 2020. This plan, Mr. Ranfranz said, that the cost to implement this plan was estimated at \$879.3 million which includes approximately \$34.5 million in commuter rail modernization projects, \$230.6 million in commuter rail service expansions, and \$6.5 million in fixed route bus service expansions. The estimated cost to implement recommended highway system improvements includes \$113.2 million for local agency projects and \$489 million for INDOT projects.

Mr. Ranfranz introduced Ms. Holly Butcher of NIRPC who addressed the Commission on various projects which were implemented in 1999 in northwest Indiana. These projects are part of the federal Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Mr. Jim Thorne, Transportation Planner at NIRPC, was next introduced by Mr. Ranfranz. Mr. Thorne addressed the Commission on the *Redesignation Proposal U.S. 6 to Ridge Road From S.R. 51 to Burr Road*. Mr. Thorne told the Commission that this proposal would; reduce hydrocarbon emissions; reduce traffic volumes on the Borman Expressway; provide relief to parallel secondary roads; decrease travel time on the improved section of the road.

Ms. Belinda Petroskey of NIRPC was introduced by Mr. Ranfranz. Ms. Petroskey addressed the Commission on regional transit needs. In her presentation, Ms. Petroskey highlighted the transit needs of Lake County, Porter County, and LaPorte County.

#### B. Second Meeting (August 30, 2000) State House Indianapolis

At the second meeting, the Commission heard testimony from the Chair on the status of a proposed letter from the Commission to the Indiana Congressional delegation. The Chair told the Commission that the Legislative Council tabled the approval of the letter, but that the Personnel Subcommittee of the Legislative Council was considering a recommendation that the Legislative Council instead send a letter of support to the Indiana Congressional delegation. Senator Landske told the Commission that individual members were free to send letters of support on their own.

The Commission next heard testimony from Mr. Jim Poe the Indiana Department of Revenue (INDOR). Mr. Poe reviewed the current findings of the study of extra heavy duty trucks (also known as Michigan trains) initiated by the INDOT and the IDOR. Mr. Poe discussed the origins of the study and said that the study was not yet complete. Mr. Poe discussed several questions the study hoped to answer including, "How does the (extra heavy duty truck) industry work?" and "What exactly is a Michigan train, i.e. the size, weight, description and cargo?" Mr. Poe

discussed the differences in the allowed weight in Michigan and Indiana. He said of Michigan trains, that 95% of the freight they carry is steel coils, and that 85% of the freight carried is destined to leave Indiana.

Mr. Poe testified that the cargo of the Michigan trains has a value of \$3 billion dollars, and provides an estimated \$86 million dollars in gross profit to the companies involved in carrying the freight. Mr. Poe said that there are 94 miles of designated extra heavy duty highways in Indiana, and that there are 76 trucking companies that have obtained permits to engage in extra heavy duty hauling. Mr. Poe stated that these companies paid \$3.7 million dollars in permit fees in 1999. He also informed the Commission that estimates show that 50% of the trucks that carry weights that fall into the extra heavy duty category do not have extra heavy duty permits to carry freight.

Mr. Poe described two Michigan train problems that the Commission had identified in previous meetings. First, under the Indiana Administrative Code (105 IAC 10-2-1 and 105 IAC 10-2-2) permits cost \$42.50 and are valid for one calendar day. Second, certain operators hauling extra heavy duty freight will engage in "double loading" to maximize the profits from one trip. Mr. Poe explained that double loading was when a driver will pick up a steel coil at one steel mill, and leaves the first mill at a legal weight. The driver will then drop that load at a safe staging point, and proceed to a second mill to pick up another load, also at a legal weight. The driver will then return to the staging area, connect both legal loads together, and then travel on at a now illegal weight that exceeds the maximum allowed.

Mr. Poe explained that the Indiana Administrative Code requirement that extra heavy duty permits are valid for one calendar day has been changed to a 24 hour period, thereby solving that major problem. On the issue of double loads, the IDOR and the INDOT are still seeking a solution.

The Commission next heard testimony from Mr. Poe and Ms. Kathy Noland of the INDOT on the recent national initiative on truck scales which left each state responsible for the weighing of entering traffic only. The northbound scales on Interstate 65 were closed since, under the initiative, Illinois would have responsibility to weigh all incoming trucks. Mr. Poe outlined the penalty process, the plea bargains that occur, and the ultimate dismissal of charges or payment of fees.

Mr. Kenny Cragen of the Indiana Motor Truck Association (IMTA) discussed the history of Michigan trains, and the need for stricter enforcement of current law. Mr. Cragen urged a complete review of the statutes and organization of extra heavy duty vehicle law, and offered several enforcement options: (1) proper use of scales; (2) better training on the use of scales; (3) use part of the IDOR for enforcement purposes; (4) keep permanent scales open 24 hours a day 7 days a week; and (5) increase the use of portable scales.

#### C. Third Meeting (October 12, 2000) South Bend Regional Airport

At the third meeting, the Commission heard testimony from Mr. John Schalliol, Manager of the South Bend Regional Airport. He described the proposed expansion of the South Bend

Regional Airport. Mr. Schalliol also told the Commission that AIR 21, the federal funding bill which provides grants to general aviation airports, would place an increased workload for the INDOT's Aeronautics Division and that he was concerned about INDOT's staffing and ability to handle the increased workload.

Also testifying at the meeting was Mr. Richard Ives, a member of the NICTD Citizens Advisory Board (CAB). Mr. Ives testified that the CAB has been in existence since June, 2000, and that it is a ten member board. Mr. Ives said that his membership on the CAB has been a learning experience and that he has a better understanding of the operations of NICTD and the South Shore Railroad. He also said that the CAB normally meets in Chesterton. Mr. Ives said that on-time performance of the trains is a big issue with the CAB, along with maintenance of the restrooms and facilities in general .

Ms. Kathy Noland of the INDOT addressed the Commission on the status of the work on U.S. 41. Ms. Noland introduced Mr. Rod Adams and Ms. Chris Baynes, project managers of the work on U.S. 41. Ms. Noland said that the estimated cost of the work is \$40 million. Ms. Noland told the Commission that the big concern for the INDOT is keeping the traffic moving. Ms. Baines told the Commission that every parcel of land along the work route is engaged in negotiations at the present time. She also said that while changes can occur during land acquisition, the overall scheme is final. She further testified that the INDOT wants to improve the existing intersection where there were 1,200 accidents in a three year period.

Mr. Ken Johnson, Highland, Indiana, business owner along U.S. Highway 41. Mr. Johnson told the Commission that the rules governing such projects as U.S. Highway 41 should be changed to use tax records as well as plat records. He said that the lessees and landlords should be contacted. He also testified that he was concerned about the materials used in the project. Mr. Johnson said that he fears that asphalt will not stand up to the traffic. Mr. Johnson further commented that he was concerned about the infrastructure drainage associated with road repairs.

Mr. Jerry Hanas of NICTD testified about the financial conditions of NICTD. He said that he pending capital improvements over the next five years leaves NICTD about \$60 million short. Mr. Hanas said that eight new cars are to be delivered by the end of the calendar year. He also said that NICTD is rebuilding 44 cars over the next three years.

#### D. Fourth Meeting (October 27, 2000) Chesterton

At its fourth meeting, the Commission heard testimony concerning the Lake County Regional Transportation Committee(LCRTC) from Dr. Dennis Rittenmeyer, President of Calumet College of St. Joseph, and a member of the Lake County Regional Transportation Committee. In his testimony, Dr. Rittenmeyer told the Commission that the LCRTC advises and makes recommendations on transportation issues to the Lake County Council. He said that the LCRTC is attempting to create a Regional Transportation Authority (RTA), but the LCRTC has encountered a problem with a legal interpretation by the Lake County Attorney. Dr. Rittenmeyer told the Commission that the LCRTC is pursuing public funding for the RTA. He also said that the LCRTC is working with the Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission (NIRPC).

The Commission next heard testimony about Magnetic Levitation technology from representatives of the USX Corporation, the U.S. Steel Group, and Mag Lev Inc. In the

presentation about maglev, Mr. Frank Clark, Vice-President of Mag Lev Inc. provided the Commission with a Power Point presentation about magnetic levitation technology and the proposed 47 mile maglev alignment in Pittsburgh, PA. Called the Pennsylvania Project, Mr. Clark said that this project would be the first step in creating a state and regional maglev system. Further, Mr. Clark said that the Port Authority of Allegheny County, PA and Mag Lev, Inc. are working together to bring high speed maglev to Pennsylvania. The Pennsylvania Project is one of seven states competing for nearly \$1 billion set forth by the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st. century (TEA 21), approved by the Congress and funded through the Federal Railroad Administration. The cost for the 47 mile segment would be approximately \$1.8 billion, or about \$39 million per mile.

Next the Commission received a report on the status of proposed Hovercraft transportation from Northwest Indiana to Chicago. The report entitled *Hovercraft Feasibility Analysis* was completed by Mr. Ken Cypra for NIRPC. The report outlined possible uses of Hovercraft transportation from Northwest Indiana to Chicago and back. This report was done in 1991. The report cited several markets which would make proposed Hovercraft transportation from Northwest Indiana to Chicago feasible, among those cited are: commuter, excursion, and transportation. The report defined a commuter market as one with a primary focus on the Chicago workplace. An excursion market was identified as one consisting of day-trippers and would operate primarily from Chicago to Northwestern Indiana. A transportation market was defined as one which simply uses the high speed waterborne transportation to transport an individual, an auto, and accompanying passengers between two points on Lake Michigan in lieu of driving between the two points.

The report also discussed facility availability for high speed waterborne traffic. The report commented that, at present, passenger waterborne service on the south end of Lake Michigan is limited to excursion service operating out Chicago and fishing charters operating from Northwestern Indiana. As a result, the report concluded, there is little in the way of passenger loading and unloading facilities.

The report identifies the development of marinas at Hammond, Portage, and Gary, coupled with the existing marinas at East Chicago and Michigan City as providing favorable environments in which to develop loading and unloading facilities. The report identifies loading facilities in Chicago at the Michigan Avenue Bridge. However, the report continues, to get to these facilities from Lake Michigan requires the transiting of the Chicago River lock. This is a time-consuming process, according to the report.

The report does not specifically identify any costs associated with Hovercraft transportation, but does comment that capital and operating costs must be enumerated for whatever high speed waterborne transportation is deemed feasible. The report also said that the origin of such funds must be determined.

The report discusses service development and integration by commenting that high speed waterborne transportation can and should compliment other forms of transportation within Northwest Indiana. The report mentioned that mariana development and casino development would be complemented by high speed waterborne transportation.

The report concludes by saying that implementation would be based on the answers to the questions posed above.



Ms. Kathy Noland, Director of Public and Legislative Affairs for the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) and Lt. Guy Boruff of the Indiana State Police (ISP) Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Section presented information on Virtual Weigh Stations. In his presentation, Lt. Boruff explained that Virtual Weigh Stations use Weigh-In-Motions scales (WIMs) to screen a stream of traffic for excessively loaded vehicles. These WIMs are imbedded in the pavement and can measure the weight of each axle of every vehicle that passes over them. Electronic equipment in the scale's operating system can then classify each vehicle, measure its speed and determine if axle loads or gross vehicle weights are violated for that class of vehicle. This is all done in a matter of seconds, providing officers with an accurate method for determining which vehicles are breaking the law. The current practice is to either pull every truck into a weigh station or to guess at which trucks are non-compliant and then pull them over.

Lt. Boruff further said that the WIMs fit in with the overall strategic plan of the ISP to use permanent scales and mobile scales. Lt. Boruff told the Commission that trucks easily bypass fixed scales and that fixed scales are costly. He also said that the WIMs cost less to operate and are an unpredictable enforcement tool. By this, Lt. Boruff commented, enforcement officers can be positioned out of sight of the traffic being monitored. He said that compliance rates can be monitored and bridge wear can be studied better. Lt. Boruff also said that use of WIMs enables truck movement studies.

In his presentation, Lt. Boruff identified project actions to enable the WIMs to become a reality for Indiana. These actions are: 1) gain the INDOT Commissioner's approval; 2) identify the stakeholders in the use of WIMs; 3) define "manual" version functionality; 4) establish reasonable time frame; 5) prepare construction plans; 6) arrange funding; 7) build the system; 8) train operators; 9) operate system for a test period; 10) produce an evaluation report; 11) revisit next steps of Deployment Plan.

Lt. Boruff next identified the Operation Phase. This phase consists of Purdue University involvement, a fiscal year 2001 project, along with an appropriation of \$115,000 to study WIMs. The next part would include INDOT's building the WIMs. The ISP would utilize them and plan enforcement and Purdue would analyze and manage the database.

The Commission next heard and discussed the seven resolutions which had been requested by the Commission. The resolutions addressed various aspects of transportation, both for Northwest Indiana and Indiana generally.

## **RESOLUTIONS**

20011755 urges the Indiana General Assembly to appropriate funds into the Indiana Department of Transportation budget to assist in the establishment of a high speed rail passenger system. After a brief discussion and the changing of "to establish" to "assist in the establishment", the resolution passed by a vote of 11 to zero.

20011750 urges Congress and the President to establish a dedicated national funding mechanism for high speed passenger rail. After a brief discussion, the resolution passed 11 to zero.

20011690 urges the adoption of the Vision 2020 Plan of the Northwest Indiana Regional Transportation Plan. After a brief discussion, the resolution passed 11 to zero.

20011719 urges the establishment of adequate facilities and transportation to meet the increased usage of the South Shore Line to and from the Gary/Chicago Airport. After a brief discussion, the resolution passed 11 to zero.

20011727 endorses the Illiana Expressway. This expressway would connect I 57 in Illinois with I 65 in Indiana.

20011593 urges the Indiana General Assembly to appropriate funds to the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District to purchase new overhead power distribution and signal/traffic management systems. After a brief discussion, the resolution passed 11 to zero.

20011660 urges the Indiana General Assembly to appropriate the funds necessary to implement the findings of the West Lake County Corridor Major Investment Study (MIS) conducted to analyze routing alternatives and select a preferred alignment for expanded commuter rail service from Northwest Indiana to Chicago's Central Area. After a brief discussion, the resolution passed 11 to zero. Illinois I 65 in Indiana. After a brief discussion, the resolution passed 11 to zero.

## **V. COMMITTEE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Commission made the following findings of fact:

- 1) That high-speed passenger rail is an important aspect of transportation in Indiana.

The Commission made the following recommendations:

1. Through the passage of seven resolutions on transportation, the Commission urged the Indiana General Assembly, the Congress, and the President to take various actions to assist in the development of transportation in the State. These resolutions follow:

20011755 urges the Indiana General Assembly to appropriate funds into the Indiana Department of Transportation budget to assist in the establishment of a high speed rail passenger system.

20011750 urges Congress and the President to establish a dedicated national funding mechanism for high speed passenger rail.

20011690 urges the adoption of the Vision 2020 Plan of the Northwest Indiana Regional Transportation Plan.

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## WITNESS LIST

Roger Sims, President, Indiana High Speed Rail Association  
Larry Goode, Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT)  
Jerry Hanas, Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District (NICTD)  
Jim Ranfranz, Northwestern Indiana Regional Transportation Planning Commission (NIRPC)  
Holly Butcher, NIRPC  
Jim Thorne, NIRPC  
Belinda Petroskey, NIRPC  
Jim Poe, Indiana Department of Revenue  
Kathy Noland, INDOT  
David Holtz, INDOT  
Kenny Cragen, Indiana Motor Truck Association  
John Schalliol, South Bend Regional Airport  
Richard Ives, NICTD Advisory Board  
Kent Johnson  
John Parsons, NICTD  
Dennis Rittenmeyer, Calumet College  
Frank Clark, Maglev, Inc.  
Michael Dixon, U.S. Steel Group  
John Shortridge, USX Corp.  
Lt. Guy Boruff, Indiana State Police